

A Letter to a Person of Honour, concerning the  
BLACK BOX.

My Lord,

**Y**OU are pleased to command me to give you some account of the Foundation of that Report which hath arrived with you concerning a *Black Box*; and withall to let you know how Sir *Gilbert Gerard* acquitted himself at his appearance before the King and Council in reference to that affair. As to the first, I must crave leave to distinguish betwixt what is *material* in that business, and what is merely *circumstantial*, and serveth only by way of *purad*. Your Lordship, whose conversation hath given you great advantages of knowing the reports of the World in relation to the *Kings* Marriage with the *Duke of Monmouths Mother*, can easily recollect that there was never so much as a suggestion given out, till of late, of any such thing as a *Black Box*, nor of a Writing importing a Contract consigned by the late *Lord of Durham* to the Custody of Sir *Gilbert Gerard*. And had there been any thing of that consequence committed to and entrusted with him, he is both a person of that Honour and Courage as to have dar'd to have own'd and justified it; and a Gentleman of that discretion and wisdom that he would ere this have acquainted the Parliament with it, to whom both the Cognisance and Decision of a matter of so grand importance do properly belong. But in truth, the whole referring to the *Black Box*, is a meer Romance, purposely invented to sham and ridicule the business of the Marriage, which indeed hath no relation to it. For they who judge it conducing to their present Interest to have the *D. of M's* Title to the Crown not only discredited but exposed, thought it necessary, instead of nakedly enquiring whether he be the *Kings Legitimate* or only *Natural Son*; to bring upon the Stage a circumstance no way annexed with it, supposing that this being found a Fable, the Marriage it self of the *K.* with the said *Ds. Mother*, would have undergone the same Censure. But by what I do perceive they were mistaken in their measures; seeing most men know how to separate what they endeavoured to artificially to have interwoven. And all that I can apprehend they are like to get by it is, the raising a Devil they will not easily lay.

For, *My Lord*, it is in the first place apparent, that the starting of this business is to be wholly ascribed to the *Duke of York*, and those under whose Conduct he regulates himself and his concerns. Had any others been the first movers in it, you may be sure they would never have ventur'd it before the Council, as it is now influenced and moulded; but they would have waited till the sitting of the Parliament, where they might expect nothing but Impartiality and Justice.

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In the second Place, The very intimation that any besides the D. of Y. doth so much as pretend a Title to the Crown, will operate with many to a belief, that it is not without reason that he doth so. For the only way to undeceive men in a matter of vain and groundless credulity, is to neglect and despise them; whereas all endeavours to convince them, do but contribute to the strengthening them in their faith. What will the People say? But that if the D. of M. were not Legitimate Heir would the Papists, by whose Inspirations the D. of Y. governs himself, so effectually bestir themselves as to desire that an affair of so vast importance, and wherein the whole Kingdom is concerned, should be judged of by twenty or thirty persons, who have neither Legislative nor Judicial power.

And in the third Place, Should they compass all that they can propose to themselves from the Board, yet it would no way advantage the D. of Y. nor give the least prejudice to the D. of M. providing his Claim be just, and can be evidenced to be so before the great Representative of the Nation. For beyond all peradventure, these things howsoever resolved upon and determined at the Council, will be called over again by the Parliament. Nor will the Opinion of the Table, ballance that great and wise Body to judge otherwise, than as their Consciences, upon a hearing of the whole matter, shall oblige them. And of what little signifiycancy the Resolves of the Council, though stamped and enforced with the Authority of a King, are to the imposing a Supream Ruler upon the Nation, when a Legal Claim lyes in Opposition, we are sufficiently instructed by the Instance of Jane Gray, though a Lady of those Endowments which few of either sex ever parallel'd, and recommended at that time to the Nation by many Enducements and Motives.

In the fourth Place, The method of manning this Affair, gives us more surprize than all the rest, and seems wholly Calculated, to Intricate matters, rather than clear them. For your Lordship and all others, who are Masters of that sense which you possess, would be ready to conceive, that the main, if not the only thing inquired into, should be, Whether the King was really Married unto Madam Walters, and whether the D. of M. was Born in lawful Wedlock? But in stead of this, all the mighty Inquisition hath been, Whether this or that person had of a Black Box, or of a Contract referring to the Kings Marriage with that Lady, committed to the keeping of Sir Gilbert Gerard. Now what is all this to the reality of the Marriage, seeing it might be transacted, as most other Marriages are, In verbis de presenti, and of which no other Proof can be expected besides the Testimony of such as were personally present.

Fifthly, The persons whom they have in this whole matter summoned before them and examined, adds to the suspicion and encreaseth the astonishment. For People who think congruously to the subject before them, had conceived, That the

the main Scrutiny would have been either in reference to the Assurances given to the *Countess of Weems* concerning the Legitimacy of the *D. of M.* before she disposed her Daughter in Marriage to him, or else that all the Examinations relating to this business would have been principally confined to those who were beyond Sea with the King when this Marriage is supposed to have happen'd. *But all this seems to have been industriously waved, and in the room of these, a few persons have been brought before, and Interrogated by the Counsel, who could never be supposed to have heard otherwise of it than by way of vulgar tale. And as I dare boldly affirm, that there is no one person who is accustomed to the fellowship of the Town, who hath not heard of such a Marriage; so it is uncontrollably known, That there was in Olivers time, a Letter intercepted from the King to the said Lady, then in the Tower, superscribed, to his Wife. Nor is it unknown with what homage the Kings party in England, at that time paid their Devotion and testified their Obedience to her. For as they addressed her upon the Knee, so by that and many other Symbols, they declared that they esteemed her for no less than the lawful Wife of their King and Master:*

Sixthly, 'Tis of no great concernment, who is the immediate apparent Heir in the Regal Line, if we do but consider that the Parliament of England hath often provided a Successor to the Government, when the Interest of the *Publick* hath required it, without the least regard to such *Punctilio's*. They who preferred William Rufus, and Henry the 1<sup>st</sup>. to Robert, though Eldest Son of William the Conquerour, what can they not do when weighty Reasons and Causes influence them unto it? And they who advanced Stephen before Maud, and John before his Eldest Brothers Son, can they not, when the Safety of the Kingdom requireth it, put the Scepter into whose hands they please. Nor hath Bastardy it self been an Obstruction to the conferring of the Crown upon a person, provided all things else have corresponded with the desires and Humours of the *People*. For not only Athelstan, the Great Saxon King, was such, but *Q. Mary* or *Q. Elizabeth*, must be so Blazon'd, and yet all three were Exalted to the Regal Throne. And two of them, not only approved themselves worthy of the Trust reposed in them, but have consigned down that stock of Fame and Credit, which few attaining unto, hath left a Reproach upon most Princes who have succeeded them. Even Henry the 7<sup>th</sup>. (from whom our King derives his Title and Right of Succession) sprung from a Bastard, who had nothing to render him capable to convey a Claim to his Posterity, but that he was made Legitimate by Parliament.

Seventhly, The Council had done a thing grateful to the Nation, and consonant to their Oathes and Duty, if in stead of attempting to establish the Duke of York as Heir apparent, they had examined, Whether, notwithstanding his Affinity to the King, he hath not by manifold Treasons against

the Person of his Majesty, as well as against the Government, forfeited his Life to Justice, and made himself obnoxious to a Scaffold, while he is pretending to a Thorne. He is yet a Subject, and accountable for the Breach of the Laws, and why his Crimes should find shelter in his Greatness, I know not. 'Tis in vain to pretend to the Right of Succession, when his Treasons were a Self Deposition, were he actually Regnant. Whosoever Conspires against any one part of the Constitution, forfeits all he can Claim by any other branch of it. To be accessory to a Plot for the destruction of the People, is to abdicate himself from all Legal pretences of Reigning over them. Now the being seduced, and seducing so many of his Majesties Subjects from the established Religion, to that of Popery, is Treason by two Statutes, viz. Eliz 22 1. Jam. 3 4. And for which (say the words of the Stat.) They shall forfeit as in cases of High Treason As the late Proclamation by King and Council hath also significantly declared. The countenancing the Burning of London, the endeavouring to alter the limited Monarchy into a Despotick Rule, and the combining with the Papiests in all the parts of the Late Plot, make him lyable to the Ax, while he is aspiring to a Scepter.

Eightly, A more unaccountable thing yet than all the former is, to see the King so far concern himself in having the Succession declared and determined. For it is not usual to find a Prince appear in favour of a Brother, when so many are in the Belief, that he hath a Legitimate Son of his own. Many Kings have endeavoured the advancement of their Bastard Children, to the exclusion of their nearest Relations of the right Blood; Only Charles the 2d. will be the first on the File of History, that when nothing but his bare Word was needful to the setting his Dominions on his Son as Legitimately born, He alone, and in the face of strong suspitions to the contrary, would insinuate him to be only his Natural Son, and for no other reason but that he would gratify his greatest Enemies. I'm sure we read of few Kings that ever gave any great Countenance to their Brethren, when they were their presumptive Heirs, though in the mean time they would not deprive them of their Legal Rights, providing they came to out-live them. Yea there are not many Ages past since the Heir apparent's being only attended by a greater Train than the King then reigning over these Kingdoms used to be accompanied with, is thought to have given that jealousy to the Father as cost the young Gentleman his Life. Surely considering the present posture of affairs, and the obnoxiousness of the Papiests to the Law, for their many and continued Conspiracies against his Majesties Person, the Lives of the People, the Protestant Religion, and the Peace and Safety of the Government, it were the King and Kingdoms Interest to have the D. of Y's. Title (as to his Succeeding to the Crown) to be left undetermined and doubtful. Nor can any thing so effectually conduce both to the Kings own Security, and that

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of his Protestant Subjects, as to leave the D. of Ys. under a Belief, that should the King be taken away, there is one still behind, that can dispute the Crown with him. Nor can the D. of Y. pursuing the having the Right of Succession at this time settled, intimate less to considering persons, but that the Papists entertain new Designs against his Majesties Life, and that only they want such a Declaration for the hastening of the Execution of them. Your Lordship knows that Q. Elizabeth would never positively name her Successor, though often importuned by Parliaments so to do; for she very well understood, that if this had been once done, she should afterwards Reign only by his condescension, and owe the remain of her Life, and the Peace of the Government to his Grace and Favour whom she had published for presumptive Heir. And truly the Kings falling so immediately ill after the D. of Y. had so earnestly solicited for a formal Declaration of his being next Heir to the Crown, occasioned some mens grounds of Fear, that his dispatch is not only resolved, but the Springs and Causes of it disposed before, and that all things being ripe, this was merely contrived to facilitate the Dukes Entrance upon the Government.

In brief matters are arrived at that pass, that the Papists cannot suffer the King to continue, and the Duke and they long escape the demerit of their actions. For as his Majesty cannot subsist nor preserve the Reputation of his Crown and Government, many months longer without a Parliament, no more can they, through the number, quality and palpableness of their Crimes bear one. So that the necessity of their Affaires, as well as their Inclinations, seconded by their Principles, oblige them by one means or another to remove him. Wherein if they succeed, as I see no rational foundation of Judging but that they will, there is nothing remains towards the preserving our Religion, Lives and Liberties, but to endeavour according to the Vote and Resolve of the last Parliament, to revenge his Death upon the Papists. 'Tis true the King would not be prevailed upon by any Importunities (though frequently made by the D. at the Board on Wednesday last) to order a Council-Table Declaration in favour of Yorks right to Succeed in case His Majesty should dye before him, yet the business would appear to be so far gone, and all things so disposed already in prospect of what they intend, that they cannot without hazarding their whole concernments recall themselves from the purpose of murdering him. Yea the Kings not gratifying the Duke in his so often repeated suit, will now serve only to possess them with apprehensions of jealousy and make them accelerate rather than delay the wickedness. 'Tis possible they may foresee that it will be accompanied with greater hazards than it would have been, could they have compassed that Business. But they are gone past retreat, and must either perish by the Sword of Justice, or seek to protect



test themselves, by destroying the King. And though this failure give them greater apprehensions that they must seek their safety by recourse to force, than there would have been cause for, had the *Duke* obtained such a Declaration; yet men in their circumstances, and where there is no *Medicum*, will chool rather to venture the being slain in the field, than hang'd on a *Gibbet*, or to have their *Heads* cut off upon a *Block*.

*Ninethly*, As I know not who dare proclaim the *D. of T.* should the *K.* depart this life before him, seeing the House of Commons, in a Bill, twice read and pass, have made it not only Capital, but Treasonable to do it; So if my Information do not greatly deceive me, The *D. of M.* before he was taken from his Mother in *Holland* and carried to *Paris*, went for, and was acknowledged as *Prince of Wales*. And consequently to undermine this *Title*, if in the issue he should prove so, is not less than Treason by the Statute. And your Honour knows, that though the King's Affirmative might be of some signficancy, towards the Declaration of his Legitimacy, and corroboration of his Right to the Imperial Crown, yet his Negative imports just nothing, when confronted with positive Evidence to the contrary.

*Lastly*, Whereas the Partisans and Parasites of the *D. of T.* would have it judged too great a reproach upon the King, that ever he should be thought to have married a person of so low a quality as *Madam Walters*; they do but in that discover at once their small acquaintance with History, and either their want of memory or ingenuity in what concerns his *R. H.* Your Lordship doth very well know, that *Edw. 4.* though actually in the Throne, and withal a Magnanimous and Victorious Prince; yet he Married an ordinary Gentlewoman, and the not only one of his own Subjects, but the Relict of a former Husband, and the Widow of an Enemy to his Crown and Family. Whereas the King when supposed to have married the *D. of M.'s* Mother, was actually in Exile; the utmost of his Possessions lying in some faint hopes, which his Right to the *English* Throne administred unto him. And as it is not improbable but that he found it necessary to marry rather than by taking another course to alienate the minds of those further from him, whose love it was his Interest to recover; So the deplorableness of his condition at that time gave him small encouragement to demand in Marriage any that was the Daughter of a neighbouring King or Monarch. Nor is it difficult to conceive how far the Wit, Beauty, and Air of such a Lady as *Madam Walters* was, might prevail upon and entangle a young Prince both naturally *Amorous*, and always an admirer of such Qualifications. Nay, *My Lord*, though the *D. of T.* hath been twice Married, and when in much better circumstances than the King then was; yet he hath no great cause of bearing himself upon the Antiquity or Greatness of the Families into which he hath Matched. For, I'm sure neither of his Dutchesses derived their Descent from so eminent a Pedigree or of that Figure in *Heraldry*, as the *D. of M.'s* Mother. proceeded from. They are great Strangers in *England*, who do not know that her Father was a Gentleman of an old *British* *Lineage*, and stood possessed of a much airer Estate, than the late Lord Chancellor *Hide* was ever born unto. And though I will cast no Reflection upon his Acquisitions, yet this may be affirmed with modesty, That he was more indebted to the favour of his Prince for them, than any extraordinary merit in himself, or recommendation by the Dignity and Services of his Ancestors. And one would think the returns he made unto his Majesty in more than a thousand Instances, should not render the King very fond of transmitting the Crown to his Off-spring.

My Lord, having endeavoured to obey you in one of your Commands, I shall in the next place apply my self to the consideration of your second. And to ease your Lordship of all unnecessary and superfluous trouble, I shall not entertain with any long Character of Sir Gilbert Gerrard, as presuming that that Gentleman is fully known unto you. All I shall therefore say concerning him is, That he is still the same, and of the same Principles he was when he suffered so much for the King in the late Times. That is, *He is a Loyal Subject, a good Protestant, and a true English man; one who will Obey his Prince as far as Conscience, Law, and Honour will allow him, but will sacrifice none of these, neither upon Mercenary terms, nor to avoid impending dangers.* And as it were happy for the King, were all his Subjects of that Figure, so it would greatly redound to the Honour of the Church of England to have all her Members of that Complexion and Temper. Nor ought his being put out of the Commission of the Peace be construed as any Reflection upon him, seeing he hath so many worthy and deserving Persons, in all the Counties of England sharers with him in the same Fortune. What the occasion of that treatment was, your Lordship fully understands, tho you were no way interested in the Affair; and it is to be hoped that the King may in Time discover the perniciousness of those Counsels which both prevented his hearkening to the humble Entreaties of many of his People, and have influenced him to dissolve a great number of his best Subjects. 'In sure, both his Majesty and the Kingdom do already sensibly suffer by it, while the Gentlemen themselves, are only discharged from a burthen. There may possibly be some mean souls who covet being in the Commission, to obtain a respect in their Country, or to make a gain by their Office and Employment, but Sir Gilbert with those other Gentlemen who are in the same predicament with him, are persons, who in their greatest privacies, can command a deference from all about them, and whom God hath blessed both with Estates and Minds which exalt them above the temptations off fees for Warrants, or Gratuities for connivance at the breach of his Majesties Lawes.

But my Lord that I may give you the better the History of this Transaction, or rather *faite* concerning Sir Gilbert Gerrard's appearing before the Council; you may be pleased to know that he was sent for by a letter under the hand of my Lord Sunderland requiring him to come immediately up. And because a *Missive* by the Post might have too much preserved the Priviledg of a Member of Parliament, and intimated too great a respect to a Gentleman whose Brother had lost his life for owning his Majesties interest under Oliver Cromwell, and himself undergone costly and severe imprisonments; there was a Creature styled a Gentleman Usher ordered to carry the Letter and to bring him to White Hall.

Now though Sir Gilbert, was hardly recovered from a fit of the Stone, and remained confined by weakness to his Chamber when these *Blades* arrived at his House; yet he immediately complied with the message and addressed himself to his Journey with all the expedition he could, thereby testifying at once his obedience to his Majesty and the security he enjoyed in his own mind as to his innocency though he knew not what he was sent for. Being come to the Court, instead of meeting with my Lord Sunderland, there was an order left for the conducing him to Mr. Coventry who was then the other Secretary of State, though he hath since resigned to Sir. Layonel Jenkins. But whereas every rational man would have apprehended that a Parliament man being seized and brought so far prisoner within the time of priviledg, could have been questioned concerning nothing less than a Plot to assassinate the King, or a Conspiracy of Levying War against the Govern-

ment; yet all he was interrogated about was if the late *Lord of Durham* had at any time entrusted him with a *Black Box* containing a Contract of Marriage between the *King* and the *Duke of Monmouth's* Mother, or whether he had seen any such Contract. You may easily apprehend that he was not a little surpris'd after all the fatigue and expence they had put him unto, to find himself examined in relation to so ridiculous and Romantick a story. However being obliged to make a civil Answer, he told the Secretary, that he was neither entrusted with such a Box, nor had so much as heard of such a Contract, Which Reply of *Sir Gilbert's* being recorded in writing, *Mr. Coventry* was pleas'd to tell him (by what Warranty we may possibly know some other time) that he was oblig'd both to subscribe it and to ratify it by an Oath. *Sir Gilbert* being more amaz'd than before, reply'd, That as he little imagin'd that he had been sent for upon a business of that nature, seeing he knew no reason why his name should be interest'd in it, so he wou'd neither set his Hand to the Answer he had given, nor take his Oath to confirm it. And indeed he had reason for what he said, for how could he know but that this might be a leading Question to something else, for whosoever had invent'd that fabulous story, might with as much truth and with more fence have charg'd him with some criminal matter. Accordingly in stead of contrasting it further with *Mr. Coventry*, he only ask'd whether he was sent for thither, and taken into Custody as a Criminal, To which the Secretary is report'd to have return'd, That he had no other directions than to ask him the fore-going Question, which he endeavour'd by many Arguments to have obtained his Reply unto under Oath. But *Sir Gilbert* wholly declining to swear, and representing that he had come a long and tedious Journey whereof he was weary, desir'd to know how he should be dispos'd of. Whereupon he was told that he might go to his Lodging, provided he would promise to attend the King and Counsel the Monday following. Where having at the time made his appearance, he was call'd in after that the Judges had been there a quarter of an hour before him. And then his Majesty was pleas'd to tell him, that he was not sent for thither to be charg'd with any Crime, but only to make Oath whether the late Bishop of *Durham* had not consign'd to him a *Black Box*, wherein was contain'd a Contract of Marriage betwixt his Majesty and the *D. of M's* Mother. To which having reply'd as before, and withall excus'd himself from taking any Oath in such cases wherein the Law had not prescribed. There were many Arguments us'd to persuade him, and long Harangues representing the mischievous consequences which a doubtful Title might occasion. But he insisting upon the Rights of an *Englishman*, namely that he ought not be required to swear but in such Cases as the Law did appoint, all the Judges, and in conjunction with them, my *Lord Chancelour*, gave their Opinion, that he was oblig'd by the Law to take his Oath in a matter of this great moment threat'n'd the Nation which no less than what fell out between the Houses of *York* and *Lancaster*. Which accordingly he did, to the purport already intimated, viz. That he knew no such thing as a *Black Box*, nor any thing relating to such a Contract of Marriage as he was then interrogated about. Now, my *Lord*, I know not how a Gentleman could have carry'd it with more True, Courage and Honour, than *Sir Gilbert* did. For, as the Opinion of the Judges were to over-rule him as to what was Law, so only a Parliament is capable of judging whether they acted consonantly to their Duty. And till that happy hour come, commend your Lordship to the divine Protection, And am,

*My Lord, Your most*

*London, May, 15.*

*Wamble Servant.*



